

Second Basic Education Project

**Phase I
Preparation Studies**

DRAFT EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN

2013-2018

Prepared for the Government of Antigua and Barbuda

By

UWI Consulting Inc.-Profiles Antigua Inc. Consortium

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Consortium of UWI Consulting and Profiles Antigua entered into a contract with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda (GOAB) through the Ministry of Education, Sports, Youth and Gender Affairs (MESYGA). The contract was to provide, a) consultancy services for preparation studies (Phase I) and b) to prepare a project proposal for CDB financing and, c) carry out environment assessments and master plan development of selected sites (Phase II) for the Second Basic Education Project of the MESYGA.

Broad Educational Context

The goals for education as seen from the perspective of the Government of Antigua & Barbuda must take into account national realities and priorities. It must also consider the broader context of a number of international, hemispheric, regional and sub-regional commitments and initiatives to which the Government is a signatory or has expressed approval or support. At the international level, the country as a member of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is obliged to embed in its educational goals and policies the principles of the UNESCO World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (Jomtien Declaration) and the UNESCO Education for All (EFA) Dakar Framework for Action. As a member of the United Nations, Antigua & Barbuda has made a commitment to pursue goals aligned with the Millennium Development Goals including that relating to the achievement of universal primary education.

At the hemispheric level, the country is a member of the Organisation of American States and is therefore an adherent to the Merida Declaration on Education endorsed by member states in 1998 within the framework of the Second Summit of the Americas. At the regional level, as a foundation member of the economic integration efforts that led to the founding of CARICOM



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and as a long-standing full member of this body, the country is subject to the declarations and commitments made at the CARICOM Heads of Governments Conferences and other subsidiary policy-making organs. The ideal CARICOM citizen/worker:

- Is capable of seizing the economic opportunities which the global environment is presenting
- Demonstrates multiple literacies, including foreign language skills, independent and critical thinking
- Has developed the capacity to create and take advantage of opportunities to control, improve, maintain and promote physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being; and to contribute to the health and welfare of the community and country.
- Nourishes in him/her and in others, the full development of each person's potential without gender stereotyping; and embraces differences and similarities between females and males as a source of mental strength.
- Has an informed respect for our cultural heritage and that of others.

Thus the vision of the ideal Caribbean person as adopted at the 18th CARICOM Heads of Governments Conference must inform the goals for education. It means also that among the goals of education in Antigua and Barbuda must be to develop citizens who are imbued with respect for human life, who are emotionally secure, who have a strong appreciation of family values, community cohesion, and moral principles, who think critically and who exhibit creative imagination.

Economic, Social and Political Landscape

With the virtual elimination of both the sugarcane and banana industries, OECS countries are relying significantly on services industries. As Downes (2001) indicated, over the past decade, the countries of the Eastern Caribbean are relying less on agriculture and light industry which



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were the sources of their foreign exchange earnings, employment and overall economic growth. However, the impressive economic growth during the 1980s and the 1990s before Hurricane Luis struck in 1995 was also experienced during the 2000s until the effects of the global financial crisis and the resulting Great Recession in the United States began to take their toll on foreign investment and tourist arrivals and spending. The national economic outlook for the short to medium term does not appear to be very good. The negative effects of the international financial crisis of 2007-08 and the subsequent global economic downturn are still working their way through the Antigua & Barbuda economy. Given the unresolved state of the gaming dispute between the country and the USA, growth in this area is unlikely. The direct and indirect effects of the collapse of the Allen Stanford, Clico and British American Insurance operations will have further drag on national economic activity for some time to come. Impacting on the educational outcomes, particularly in certain areas of the country, was the pervasiveness of poverty. Notwithstanding the impressive economic growth at the aggregate level, the skewed distribution of employment opportunities and hence income meant that many households experienced poverty. While the extent of this social condition was not investigated or measured for many years, causal observation suggested that it was a real problem in the country.

Antigua and Barbuda has shown that there is a strong commitment to improve access to good quality education given the number of activities that have taken place since the last draft 2000 Education Plan. The country has signed all the international conventions that advocate for access to education for all. The country has fulfilled the MDG 2 which calls for universal access to primary education. However, there is still room for improved in access to good quality education for children living in poverty. Boys are not succeeding as well as the girls and as a consequence, are dropping out of schools early. Strategies are needed to ensure that boys attend schools more regularly and perform better at all levels of the education system. For both boys and girls, efforts need to be made to improve the performance in Math at all levels of the system. Lifelong



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education includes both formal and non-formal education. Both types contribute personal development of all individuals. All age groups need to be equipped with the skills for fulfilment of maximum potential and all to meet the increasing demands of globalization and rapid technological changes.

Antigua and Barbuda has benefited from a stable political climate. For the three decades since political independence, general elections have been held within the constitutionally stipulated framework. Both parties are committed to democratic principles and processes and while political agitation is not unknown while sitting on opposition benches in parliament, peaceful, non-confrontational protest and political assembly have by and large been the order of the day. The people continue to take a keen interest in the political and their participation is evident in the significant turn out of voters for general elections. Press freedom is a growing phenomenon with the increasing number of media outfits. This means greater level of information being shared with the public and more importantly, accountability and openness on the part of government and the political system are treated as important agenda matters for the country.

Government Educational Goals and Policies

Looking at national realities and priorities, in determining the Government goals in the sphere of education, it is useful to look at the views of the political party that forms the government as well as goals enunciated in government documents and broadcasts. Note should also be taken of the goals articulated lawful opposition which is always positioning to replace incumbent.

One of the goals of education as seen by the Government is to properly equip all citizens of Antigua & Barbuda so that they can be “functional and contributing members of society”. It sees that a purpose of education is to facilitate and promote the economic development of the country. In effect it sees education as ultimately determining national economic capacity. The specific areas shared by government include:



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1. The achievement of universal secondary education is one of the targeted education goals of the Government, which is to be realized by 2013
2. Expansion of tertiary education so that a larger number of high school graduates access tertiary education is a precondition for the countries to move from a developing to a developed state
3. Strengthening and enhancing Special Education to achieve greater level of effectiveness
4. Improve performance in mathematics and physics which is at an unacceptable level and there is no sign of improvement without deliberate intervention.
5. Improve the quality and effectiveness of early childhood and primary education to match the achievement of universal status of both levels of education system.
6. Address the problem of literacy and numeracy which has continued to be an hindrance to learning and academic performance by students.
7. Focus the preparedness of the workforce at the knowledge and technological level by embracing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as a key component of the education process.

Education Policies

With respect to early childhood education the government has promulgated a policy that the early children education programme plays a critical role in the contributions citizens ultimately make to Antigua & Barbuda society. It has determined that high international quality standards, guidelines, management systems, procedures, facilities, personnel, supervisory approaches and regulatory framework must characterise the sector even though it is dominated by private operators. In relations to primary education, the Government has established a policy, consistent with global, hemispheric, regional and sub-regional dictates, of free universal primary education. This is enshrined in national laws. This means that it must provide every young legal resident a primary school place up to the statutory age and the highest primary level.



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For secondary education, the Government has established a policy, in line with regional and sub-regional declarations, of free universal secondary education. Implementation of this policy commenced in 2009 and the Government has committed itself to having the free universal secondary education policy fully operational by the 2013-2014 school year.

With respect to education for children with special needs the Government the policy also involves a programme to “eventually mainstream students with special needs so that access to education is achieved by all.” The launch of the Special Education Council as authorised by the 2008 Education Act has also taken place as a prelude to expanding the special needs education programmes of the Government. As part of the policy to mainstreaming special needs students, two primary schools and two secondary schools were expected to enrol such children from January 2012.

One of the government policies on tertiary education is that the three public tertiary education institutions in Antigua & Barbuda should be amalgamated and then strengthened in order to expand the in-country opportunities of this level of education. This it is felt can serve as the platform for the creation of the University of Antigua & Barbuda, a medium policy target. The amalgamation policy was adopted as early as 2006 when consultants were engaged to craft a work programme for the amalgamation exercise. This policy is related to the national objective of ultimately having at least one university graduate per household. It is also in line with the tertiary education imperatives agreed at the OECS level.

The government has also framed a policy regarding technical and vocational education and training (TVET). TVET programmes should be streamlined, and should be developed and operated in close partnership with the private sector and should be closely linked to the workplace and further training opportunities. Fulfilment of this policy is to be achieved, *inter*



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alia, by the strengthening of the Antigua & Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE) and the National Training Agency (NTA).

Increasingly, information communications technology (ICT) is ubiquitous being visible and at work in virtually every area of human endeavour. Education is no exception. The government policy on ICT in education is to allow easy access to ICT to all students irrespective of economic status. Fulfilment of this policy is achieved by the equipping of all schools with computers and internet access and to offer upper class students and teachers with laptop computers on a loan basis. Further, all teachers are to over time receive training in ICT and in the utilisation of ICT tools in teaching.

Stakeholder Priorities

Resulting from four stakeholder consultations, the major changes that were recommended for improving the performance of the education system include the following:

1. The Education System must move from the mind-set of been academically inclined to the creation of an “intelligent” citizen.
2. There must be a linkage of the curriculum and instructions to real world experience, and towards occupation/career guidance.
3. The system methodology must begin urgently to seek to address and curtail the issue of disenfranchisement of the male student.
4. Civic as an important element that should be re-introduced into the school’s curriculum. This will include the re-cultivation of civic pride of cleanliness of our space and community.
5. Career Guidance should be a priority in the upper Secondary Schools with some interface with the business sector. Students should be exposed to different and diverse career opportunities.



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6. The Vocational and Technical areas should be re-assessed and improved to include curriculum, teachers and infrastructure.
7. Appropriate use of technology to aid and enhance the teaching and learning processes in all subject areas.
8. Continual training and assessment of teachers
9. Improved school plant infrastructure
10. Schools should improved and developed an integrated partnership with community and private sector organizations

Challenges Facing the Education Product

At present, the education in Antigua and Barbuda is plagued with numerous problems. Perhaps one of the most challenging is the lack of acceptable performance in Mathematics and Science at all levels. An examination of the problem reveals that there is a paucity of trained Mathematics and Science teachers. Many Science and Math classrooms are populated with instructors whose area of expertise is in some other discipline; therefore, it is not surprising that there are significant weaknesses in this area of study throughout the education system. These weaknesses escalate into a steep decline and consequential abandonment of these subjects by school leavers across the nation.

Review of the 1st Basic Education Plan

The development of the 1st Basic Education Plan commenced in 1999 and completed in 2000. The final draft report was submitted and accepted in 2002. The implementation of the recommendations of the Education Plan was hampered by a number of factors including extended delays and dissatisfaction with the quality of output by companies and entities contacted by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The areas highlighted were curriculum development, education management information system (EMIS) and Testing and Management (Miller, 2009). Even though there is little evidence of systematic implementation of the 1st Basic Educational Plan, the feedback provide at the consultation with sector leaders in the Education



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Ministry show that progress was made in all areas. Among the achievements including, (i) improved access to secondary education through repairs to, and expansion of facilities at eight secondary schools in Antigua and the construction of one new secondary school in Barbuda; (ii) improved maintenance services through the establishment of a Maintenance Unit at the Board of Education (BOE); (iii) reform of curricula, and testing and measurement services; (iii) a re-organisation of the management of the education system; (iv) upgrade in the qualification of 29 teachers through undergraduate level training in core subject areas; and (v) upgrade in the professional skills of teachers and Ministry staff through graduate level training in areas such as education planning, statistics, curriculum development, testing and measurement.

Curriculum Implementation Approaches and Strategies

Curriculum development, evaluation and renewal are best done when all the stakeholders have a voice and their inputs are taken and utilised in the development or renewal of a curriculum. In planning national curricula whether this process is to be considered developing the curriculum or renewing it, context is important. In this regard it is important to determine the regional and sub-regional efforts that have been undertaken at curriculum development or renewal. Central to the process of curriculum implementation are the principles of curriculum articulation, scope and sequences. The mutual accomplishment approach has been advanced as the most efficient option to implement the curriculum in a dynamic and complex learning environment, and the use of planning conferences, written curriculum guides and effective strategies are critical for success.

Priorities for the 2nd Basic Education Plan

- 1 Implement the policy framework for regulating the establishment of pre-schools in order to effect a smooth transition from pre-school to kindergarten and continue to improve access and performance in early childhood education.



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- 2 Enhance the performance of primary education with emphasis placed on strengthening the policy framework and delivery mechanisms to improve teaching, supervision and management of the education process so as to achieve greater level of students' achievement.
- 3 Expand and strengthen the diagnostic and intervention systems to respond in a timely manner to students with special needs and provide the appropriate school facilities, teaching staff and school management support to adequately address their learning and developmental challenges.
- 4 Implement policy framework to achieve universal secondary education and improve the quality of students' performance through the introduction of ICT, the improvement of the physical facilities and the availability of teachers with current training for effective delivery.
- 5 Re-establish Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a seamless component of the education system through an agreed TVET framework for the school system and relevant programme for skills development for all students.
- 6 Implement a comprehensive ICT programme based on the policy framework which would require ICT to be used to enhance the delivery of education programmes and the management of administration systems at all levels of the school system.
- 7 Respond to the curriculum needs of the schools and country by enhancing the existing support systems and developing, implementing and evaluating appropriate curricula to address areas such as literacy and numeracy, mathematics and science, and to improve the content and delivery of education at all levels of the public education system.
- 8 Increase the cadre of teachers who have the required qualifications to apply instruction techniques to deliver content as required by the curriculum while at the same time



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- provide adequate teacher support to assist with instruction and quality of supervision in the classroom.
- 9 Improve the management and supervision of the library facilities in schools, rehabilitate or construct new physical facilities for libraries, and introduce ICT to strengthen the delivery of services and improve the quality of library education.
 - 10 Strengthen the human resource development capacity and capability in the school system through the introduction of ICT to benefit both administration and learning and the deployment of and technology to improve performance of students and the school system in general
 - 11 Implement policy guidelines to support an effective administration and management of the education system based on a legal framework that promotes accountability, governance and management of the school system
 - 12 Implement the policy framework for a broad based adult and continuing education programme to address literacy and the preparation of persons for the world of work through academic and skills development programmes
 - 13 Strengthen and consolidate the partnership relationships with critical sub-sector entities in government, the private sector entities, civil society and non-government organizations to share in the process of educating the children.
 - 14 Develop and implement a decentralized budgeting process which is based in the central ministry and implement strategic funding plan to support the financing of the 2nd Basic Education Plan.



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Upgrading of Existing Physical Facilities

In the process of crafting the Education Sector Plan, one of the predecessor assignments was the preparation of a school facilities inventory. In taking the inventory of the physical facilities of the various schools the physical, safety and environmental conditions and stated enrolment capacity of the schools determined, upon analysis, whether the rehabilitation of schools would be required in order to properly address the requirements for the current and projected students' enrolment and the curricula offerings. Further, combined with the analysis and recommendations of the school location plan component of the Project, the findings of the school facilities inventory would dictate if new schools are required to successfully implement the Government's policy of universal secondary education.

The findings of the school facilities inventory dictate that the upgrading of the existing physical facilities of both primary and secondary, especially the government-owned ones, must be a high priority for the Education Sector Plan 2013-2018. Except for the new buildings that were constructed under the Basic Education Project I (BEPI), the school infrastructure in the country is over thirty-five years old. The last major school to be built was the Ottos Comprehensive that was commissioned in 1974. Further, the enrollment at all the major secondary schools is approximately two and a half times the capacity for which they were originally designed and built. In addition, the school plants have been expanded over the years, and most have maximized the land space capacity.

The buildings are showing signs of age. These include structural deterioration in the form of cracks and exposed re-enforcement as evident at several secondary schools. Most, if not all, the schools are termite infested. Rodent and bat infestation is another serious problem at many schools. Other common problems include defective electrical and plumbing systems, defective window and door systems, including fittings and closing systems, and sewage/drainage



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problems. The defacing of the buildings with graffiti and apparent vandalism are common among many of the secondary schools. It was found that a programme of first-line plant preventative maintenance was generally non-existent in the schools. For the implementation of the policy of universal secondary education of the Government to have any measure of success without negatively impacting on current secondary school attendants, all of the public secondary schools must undergo varying programmes of refurbishing as a matter of urgency. Hence this action plan must assume high priority in the implementation of the sector plan.

Designing and Constructing New Physical Facilities

The *Draft Final School Location Report* and the *Draft Final School Facilities Inventory Report* of the Project provide details with respect to a number of key attributes of the primary and secondary education system including (i) enrolment (ii) student/teacher ratio, (iii) proportion of trained teachers, and (iv) travel distance to school. On the data for the 2010 – 2011 academic year, it was observed that Ottos Comprehensive and Princess Margaret Secondary have students enrollment of 865 and 857 respectively. These are marginally above the maximum recommended policy threshold of 800 students as decided by the Ministry of Education. The enrolment of each of the other major public secondary schools is below 800 students. The information with respect to student/teacher ratios tells another story. Of the public secondary schools there are 157 classes out of 190 (or 83%) in which the maximum ratio is exceeded. In particular it must be noted that at Ottos Comprehensive all of the 25 classes were over the national policy target student/teacher ratio. At Jennings Secondary this was 21 out of 22 classes (95%) and at All Saints Secondary it was 24 out of 26 classes (92%).

These statistics clearly establish the need for one or more new public secondary schools and the consequent requirement of additional teachers if the national standard on student/teacher ratio is to be achieved anytime soon. In the vicinity of the All Saints Secondary, the Irene B Williams Secondary School at Swetes has just been created. This could relieve the problem at All Saints,



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provided the availability of the additional teaching complement that would be required in order to lower the student/teacher ratio to the required standard. Similarly, the Glanvilles Secondary should be able to relieve the problem at Pares Secondary. At Princess Margaret Secondary, Ottos Comprehensive and Clare Hall Secondary especially, and to a lesser extent the Antigua Grammar and the Antigua Girls High, the solution of the situation that cries out for relief would have to be addressed by a new school as the compounds of these schools have little or no ability to accommodate additional structures.

To determine the required solution with objectivity, all the other information gathered have to be carefully scrutinized. The data on place of residence with respect to the school location points to the need for at least two new secondary schools, one in the Grays Farm/Greenbay/Hatton area, and another near the Clare Hall, Cassada Gardens and Potters communities. The announced plans of the Government to build a new secondary school, funded by China, at Five Islands will address the former. The selection of a site in the vicinity of the Potters, Paynters, and Pigotts communities will satisfy the latter.

The new public secondary school located in the vicinity of the Grays Farm, Greenbay and Hatton communities (Five Islands) will ease the enrollment pressures at Ottos Comprehensive, Princess Margaret Secondary, and to some extent Jennings Secondary. The new public secondary school located in the vicinity of the Potters, Paynters, and Pigotts communities will stem the overcrowding at Clare Hall Secondary, Antigua Grammar, Antigua Girls High and Ottos Comprehensive, and Pares Secondary to some extent. This new secondary school could also provide a public school option to parents who enrol their children in private secondary schools such as Christ The King High, St. Joseph Academy and Antigua Seventh-day Adventist. If the tough national economic conditions persist it can be expected that private to public school migration will accelerate.



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Budget Implications

In developing the implications for the Education Sector Plan 2013-2018, the imperatives emerging from the analysis are classified under the following headings:

1. Plan Priorities by Education Sub-Sector
2. Upgrading of Existing Physical Facilities
3. Designing and Constructing New Physical Facilities
4. Pursuing Initiatives Started in the Preparatory Studies

Under the Plan Priorities by Education Sub-Sector fifteen subsectors have been identified. Budgetary provisions need to be made for each of these. The methodology adopted in developing the detailed budget for these sub-sector initiatives is to posit that the successful execution of each priority and the achievement of the expected outputs and outcomes entail budgetary implications and commitments. The detailed budget spreadsheet for the Education Sub-Sectors Priorities shows the estimated costs for pursuing each priority and how the costs are spread across the 5-year plan period.

Under Upgrading of Existing Physical Facilities we rely on the findings in the *Draft Final School Facilities Inventory Report* which estimates absolute minimum school facilities refurbishing requirements and costs to make the school plants minimally conducive to wholesome learning and teaching. The budgetary requirements for absolute minimum retrofitting in both government-owned primary and secondary schools are covered.

Under Designing and Constructing New Physical Facilities we present indicative budgetary estimates for the two new secondary schools, one to be located in the Paynters area and the other, which on the basis of information in the public domain, is at an advanced planning stage and is to be built in Five Islands and funded by Chinese government sources. More precise costing and



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specifications for the Paynters school will be the subject of the Phase II preparation studies of the Project.

Among the initiatives started in the Phase I Preparatory Studies of which this Plan is a component are the development of a school location plan with associated database management system (DBMS) software and GIS-based map system. Full benefits of these will be achieved through the installation and maintenance of the appropriate GIS software, DBMS software as well as requisite hardware and peripherals. The school facilities inventory system that has been developed will also need to be updated on an annual basis, if not more frequently, in order to generate optimum benefits to the MOE. Similar updating will need to be done on the environmental reviews of the various school plants. Emerging from the Phase I Preparation Studies is the recommendation to evaluate and upgrade the National School Bus System. The initial phase of this evaluation is covered in the budget.



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